

# ESSEX AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Established 1818

Cattle Show held in Peabody from 1895 - 1909

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It was in September, 1895, that the Essex Agricultural Society held their "Cattle Show" for the first time at their permanent fair grounds in the rear of Franklin Street, Peabody. The first "Cattle Show" was held in Topsfield in 1820 and, since that date, the Society had led a nomadic life, traveling around from place to place, stopping at each town or city in Essex County. In this manner all the larger places were visited. This had its advantages, also disadvantages, and for a long time the Society had contemplated a permanent location. In 1894 a committee was appointed, with the power to provide a suitable permanent location and buildings for the annual exhibitions. The Committee succeeded in purchasing a desirable piece of land for the show grounds, about nine acres of high land in the rear of Franklin Street. Two large buildings were erected on the easterly side of the field for the exhibition of live stock, and along one side of the field was a race track, surrounded by a fence, and a grand stand. The exhibitions of fruit and flowers were held at first in the Town House, now City Hall; later, a building for this purpose was erected at the grounds.

The Cattle Show was opened with a street parade in the morning of the first day. The program consisted of many attractions - the exhibitions of live stock and produce, fancy work, manufactures and general merchandise. Premiums were awarded by judges. There was riding and hurdle jumping at the track, trial of draft cattle and horses on the grounds, also bicycle races. The Band Concerts and Vaudeville Shows provided music and entertainment. The crowds hung around the "Midway" taking in the sights and getting taken in themselves. There were the Fakirs, the African Dodgers and dime museums, hot dogs and soft drinks. The balloon ascension was an outstanding event.

In September of 1910, the 90th Annual Cattle Show was held in Topsfield at the Treadwell Farm of 150 acres, willed to the Society about 1850, to be used for experimental farming. This was the first time for many years that the "Fair" had been held outside of Peabody. The experiment was tried of holding an old fashioned "Cattle Show" on the farm, keeping the expenses down and eliminating the attractions of a circus nature.

The Essex Agricultural Society Fair has since that date been held in Topsfield.

(Compiled for the Peabody Chamber of Commerce  
by Ruth H. Hill, August 30, 1951.)